Historicizing the Spellcheck Attribute

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**Introduction**

The spellcheck attribute has been available to web authors since February 2009 (Pilgrim, 2009, “A Brief History of the Spellcheck Attribute,” para. 9). It is new to the HTML5 standards and works with specific elements. They are the <textarea> and <input type=text> (accept passwords) elements. Several browsers support this attribute such as “Firefox 2.0, Safari 5.1 and Opera 10.5, Microsoft Edge 10.0 and Google Chrome 9.0.” (W3Schools). However, the W3Schools website lists it as a Global attribute which means that it “specifies whether the element is to have its spelling and grammar checked or not” (W3Schools, 2018). Some elements such as <p> or the paragraph tag can be paired with contenteditable and the spellcheck attribute such as in the following example: <p contenteditable=”true” spellcheck=”true”>content added/> and other elements can use the spellcheck attribute if desired. For the attribute to work with the browser, its value equals either “true” (spelling and grammar will be checked) or “false” (spelling and grammar won’t be checked).

**Examples**

**Paragraph**

<p contenteditable=”true” spellcheck=”true”>content to be edited and checked/p>

**Form**

First name: <input type=”text” name=”fname” spellcheck=”true”>

**Text area**

<textarea contenteditable

<!DOCTYPE html>

<html>

<body>

<form action="/action\_page.php" id="usrform">

Name: <input type="text" name="usrname">

<input type="submit">

</form>

<br>

<textarea spellcheck="true" rows="4" cols="50" name="comment" form="usrform">

Enter text here...</textarea>

<p>The text area above is outside the form element, but should still be a part of the form.</p>

<p><b>Note:</b> The form attribute is not supported in IE.</p>

</body>

</html>

**How the Spellcheck Attribute Works**

The spellcheck attribute tells the browser to check or not to check for spelling. Browsers “read” the text and compare it to a stored dictionary database. Safari offers suggestions for misspelled words “when the attribute is included and set to “true” (Wufoo, n.d. para. 2). The Wufoo website told how browser differ when the spellcheck attribute is present and set to the value of “true.” Some browsers, like IE10, Chrome and Opera check the word once it is typed and the punctuation or space has been added after the word (Wufoo, n.d.). In Firefox, if the onblur element (used in forms to inform the input field when the user leaves input box) is used with the spellcheck attribute set to the value of “true,” “Firefox spell checks the rest of the document” including “elements that are by default spell checked.”

Proofreading history Historicizing

Proofreading with rulers, editors and auto spell checkers

Liabilities of relying on auto spellcheckers and grammar checkers.